DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 268 629 EA 018 342

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TITLE Educational Improvement in the United States.
PUB DATE Sep 84
NOTE 13p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Qualifications; Administrator Role; Administrator Selection; Educational Improvement; Elementary Secondary Education; Job Satisfaction; Occupational Mobility; *Superintendents

ABSTRACT

Recent national reports on the status of education in the United States fail to analyze the relationship between the quality and qualifications of school superintendents and the quality of education. Superintendents appear to be hired all too often on the basis of who they know rather than of how qualified they are. Only 30 percent of the superintendents have obtained doctorates, and only 51.5 percent are certificated for their positions. Turnover among superintendents is high, affecting the quality of long-term educational development. To lessen turnover rates, an effort should be made to improve the working conditions that affect superintendents' levels of job satisfaction. (PGD)

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EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

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September 1984

EA 018 342

Here is what others write about Dr. Chand's paper on

EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

I look forward to reviewing it and am also sharing it with Secretary Bell ... Thank you for your contribution to this vital effort.

George Bush
The Vice President of the United States
Washington, D.C., October 5, 1984

We certainly agree that the significance of the superintendents is not matched by the knowledge we have about the characteristics that distinguish the good ones from the mediocre ... People like yourself will ... improve the lives and jobs of this crucial leadership group.

Milton Goldberg
Executive Director
National Commission on Excellence in Education
Washington, D.C., October 15, 1984

Thank you very much for taking the time, and making the effort to write about ABC's evening on the state of education ... I want your letter to be seen by the widest possible audience.

Peter Jennings
Anchor and Senior Editor
World News Tonight, ABC News
New York, September 28, 1984

I agree heartily that superintendents do make a difference. ... Thank you for sharing your thoughts on ways to improve the job satisfaction of superintendents. I am most appreciative of your thoughtful letter.

Ernest L. Boyer
President
The Carnegie Foundation for the
Advancement of Teaching
Princeton, N.J., December 5, 1984

I found the ideas you expressed in the paper extremely interesting. ... You are right that the issue you raised has not been thoroughly considered in the current debates about how to improve the quality of education ... I will certainly keep your ideas in mind as legislation is considered regarding education by the Congress.

Don Young
Congressman for All Alaska
Congress of the United States
Washington, D.C. 20515, November 20, 1984

:AND MANY MORE:

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EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT IN THE

UNITED STATES

Introduction

Many recent reports on the status of education have placed American schools in the national limelight. Some of the recommendations of these reports are concerning content, standards and expectations, time, teaching and leadership, and fiscal management;[1] curriculum priorities, recruitment, training and working conditions of teachers;[2] socio economics, working parents, latchkey children, quality and working conditions of teachers, and school finance.[3] Details of other reports are given in various publications.[4]

[1]The National Commission on Excellence in Education, A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (Washington, D.C.: The National Commission on Excellence in Education, U.S. Department of Education, 1983).

[2]Ernest L. Boyer High School A Report of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1983).

[3]ABC, "To Save Our Schools, To Save Our Children", September 4, 1984.

[4]See for example: William G. Spady and Gary Marx Excellence in Our Schools: Making it Happen A Joint Publication of the American Association of School Administrators and the Far West Laboratory, 1984; The National Commission on Excellence in Education Meeting the Challenge: Recent Efforts to Improve Education Across the Nation (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, November 15, 1983; U.S. Department of Education The Nation Responds: Recent Efforts to Improve Education (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, May 1984).

Educational improvement is multidimensional. Most of the recommendations given in these and other reports are important and may help in the educational improvement.

Education is a responsibility of the individual state in the nation. Each state has formed various school districts in their respective states. All the 15,236 school districts in the nation are governed by their boards of education, who have employed the school superintendents for the management of the schools. The school superintendents are the chief school administrators and hence play a vital role in the education of the young people in the nation. They are responsible for the overall success of the educational programs under their supervision. One way to bring the educational improvement like other improvements is from the top administrators. Superintendents make a difference.[5] With supportive superintendents ... success follows.[6] No other effort in educational improvement appears to be more important than the role of the superintendents. Yet, none of the aforesaid or other reports on educational reforms seems to suggest much about the effects of selection, qualifications, and working conditions of the school superintendents on the educational improvement.

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[5]Laurence Iannccone "Superintendent Make a Difference" The School Administrator (September 1981): 16.

[6]Shirley Thornton, High School Principal, San Francisco on "ABC News Nightline", September 4, 1984.

Selection of School Superintendents

Selection of a superintendent is the most crucial decision a board must face.[7] Do the board-members have the expertise to select the superintendent? Who helps the boards in the selection of their superintendents? "How high and fast you climb in school management depends to an appreciable extent on the help and information you get from the so-called Old Boys Network.... O.B.N. refers to the handful of power brokers who help place superintendents in the top jobs throughout the United States."[8] A handful of professors and superintendent search consultants working on a national or regional basis - often have inordinate influence in deciding which administrators are hired for superintendencies.[9] Says an Illinois superintendent, "The system in Illinois is controlled by the school boards association and you'd better know someone if you want to move."[10] What about the school board associations in other states? A better method needs to be established nationally for those seeking positions

[7]Paul B. Salmon and Thomas A. Shannon, Forward to Selecting a Superintendent - A Joint Publication of the American Association of School Administrators and the National School Boards Association (Arlington, Va: The American Association of School Administrators, 1979), p. 1.

[8]Jerome Cramer "They Control School Jobs: Meet the Power Brokers: The Executive Educator (February 1982): 30.

[9]"You're Wary of the Old Boys' Clout" The Executive Educator (June 1982): 29.

[10]Ibid.

and those who have positions open.[11] It's a sad day for education when it's not what you know but who you know that applies ... It's a very sick system.[12] There is very haphazard system in this country for deciding who gets to be the principal and who gets to be superintendent.[13] How can any education reform work without improving the selection of the school superintendents?

Qualifications

Only a thirty percent (30.0%) of the 15,236 superintendents in the United States have doctor's degree,[14] although 7,226 Ph.D's have been awarded in education just in one year of 1982 in the U.S.[15] More and more people with Ph.D.'s are available in the education and 200 and more applications are not uncommon for each of the many superintendency positions in the U.S.[16] Inspite of the available qualified candidates,are the lesser qualified candidates hired many a times?

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] The Honorable Bill Clinton, Governor of Arkansas on "ABC News Nightline", September 4, 1984.

[14] Krishan Chand "Job Satisfaction of Superintendents in the United States" (Ed.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1982), p. 34.

[15] Highlights from the 1982 Survey of Earned Doctorates National Research Council, Washington, D.C.

[16] Robert W. Heller "Locking up the Job Interview" The Executive Educator (January 1982): 23.

Only 51.5 percent of the superintendents in the nation have superintendency certificate[17] (a prima-facie evidence of competency);[18] the other 48.5 percent of the superintendents have principal's, teaching, or other certificates. Do the hiring of lesser qualified superintendents than the more qualified available candidates effects the hiring of other staff? Principals ... are often poorly qualified.[19] Half the states allow teachers to work with less than a bachelor's degree, while many fully trained teachers never make it to the classroom.[20] Are the lesser trained superintendents hiring as many more trained staff in their schools as the more trained superintendents? Are the superintendents without doctor's degree hiring as many Ph.D.'s in their schools as the superintendents with earned doctor's degree? What would be the effect of all this situation on the overall education?

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[17]Chand, "Job Satisfaction of Superintendents in the United States," p. 35.

[18]Richard D. Gatti and Daniel J. Gatti Encyclopedic Dictionary of School Law (N.Y.: Parker Publishing Company, 1975), p. 284.

[19]Marshall Frady on "ABC, 'To Save Our Schools, To Save Our Children", September 4, 1984.

[20]Associated Press, citing Emily Feistritzer, head of the National Center for Education Information, "Consultant says shut down half of all teachers' colleges" Anchorage Times August 29, 1984, p. N. 1.

Working Conditions

Superintendents perform a wide variety of tasks and have a demanding position.[21] The turnover of superintendents is 3,000 - 5,000 a year, which is 19-32 percent.[22] Most of the states allow only 1-3 years of employment contract for superintendents. This duration of contract and their turnover effects the continuity of the program and the quality of education. Nationwide, there is a positive relationship between the superintendents' overall satisfaction and three task variables: (1) the feelings they have concerning their status in the community, (2) sense of achievement in their profession, and (3) the prospects of renewal of their employment contract.[23] Efforts should be made to increase the superintendents' status in the community, his/her sense of achievement, and elements of an employment contract that could lead superintendents to achieve a high level of job satisfaction. Studies of statewide job satisfaction of superintendents should be conducted in each state and additional variables, if any, effecting the job satisfaction should be taken into consideration in an effort

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[21]Krishan Chand The Current Trend in the Job Description of School Superintendents in the United States ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 239 364, 1983.

[22]Richard H. Barr, Education Program Officer, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Assistant Secretary, Washington, D.C. 20202, Personal Correspondence, October 7, 1980.

[23]Chand, "Job Satisfaction of Superintendents in the United States", p. 40-41.

to improve the level of job satisfaction.[24] The job satisfaction of superintendents has a bearing on the overall success of the educational programs under their supervision.

Recommendations

1. A better procedure to select competent chief school administrators needs to be established.

2. Only those with superior professional background should be selected as superintendents.

3. Superintendents should be provided with the best possible working conditions.

4. Efforts should be made to increase the superintendents' level of job satisfaction.

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[24] Krishan Chand Job Satisfaction of Alaska School Superintendents and its Comparison with the Nationwide American Superintendency. ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 226 483, 1983.

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